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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes a forum held in Saskatchewan, Canada to discuss Indian and Metis education, with a particular focus on increasing parent involvement. Parent participation may be placed on a continuum from communication between school and parents to autonomous control of the school by parents and community. Demographic data show that Saskatchewan has a large and growing aboriginal population that will continue to have a significant impact on the province's education system. The majority of aboriginal students are now attending band-controlled schools. Forum participants emphasized the following key points for making parental involvement successful: (1) developing a welcoming climate; (2) fostering a sense of mutual respect; and (3) sharing a common cause and a meaningful reason for being involved. Participants also identified driving and restraining forces that influence the engagement of Indian and Metis parents in the delivery and governance of public education, and suggested ways to overcome restraining forces. The report describes current school governance structures and options for change that would encourage Indian and Metis involvement. Appendices include the forum agenda, participating school boards and organizations, further ideas for parent involvement, and guidelines for action planning. (KS)

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INDIAN AND MÉTIS EDUCATION

1993 FORUM

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ENGAGING PARENTS AS PARTNERS

RC 019484

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Indian and Métis Education:
Parents as Partners

SSTA Forum Report
October 14 & 15, 1993

SSTA Research Centre Report #93-10

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This report was compiled and edited by Mills Consulting Saskatoon for the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association. Several Saskatchewan Aboriginal artists contributed their artwork. Design and layout was developed by Maureen Thomas of Saskatoon Sensible Solutions.

The background paper for the Forum was developed by Barry Eidsness and Barry Bashurski. Portions of the background paper have been incorporated in this report.

The opinions and recommendations expressed were generated from the Forum and may or may not reflect the policies of the Association, but are offered as a starting point for discussion, and to serve as a resource for policy leadership.

CONTENTS

Forum Background 1

Introductions and Opening Remarks 2

Overview of Participation Continuum 5

Demographic Changes and the Implications for Saskatchewan's Public Schools 8

Engaging Parents in the Delivery of Public Education 17

Governance 37

Summary 46

Appendices

Appendix A - Agenda 50
Appendix B - Participating School Boards and Organizations 51
Appendix C - Further ideas for Enhancing Parent Involvmeent 52
Appendix D - Planning for Action 55

References and Resources 58

FORUM BACKGROUND

This report provides a summary of discussions at the 1993 SSTA Indian and Métis Forum held in Saskatoon in October, 1993. (Appendix A). The forum, sponsored by the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, included over 100 participants including representatives from educator, school trustee, administrator and parent groups. (Appendix B).

We are living in a time of transitions, where there's an increasing sense of optimism in the Aboriginal community, and there is also a sense that it's a time of individual and community healing, of coming together.

> *"When we create an education system in which Aboriginal students succeed, then all children will succeed."*
>
> 1992 Forum Participant

INTRODUCTIONS AND OPENING REMARKS

Ken Krawetz, President

Saskatchewan School Trustees Association

"The Saskatchewan School Trustees Association is organized to promote a climate in Saskatchewan supportive of excellence in Education for all children. To this end, the Association is committed to taking action that will result in equality of educational opportunity and benefit for children of Indian and Métis ancestry.

In the fall of 1992, the SSTA sponsored its first Forum on Indian and Métis Education as a way to provide direction for the Association and its member boards. A number of issues and strategies were identified at last year's forum.

This year's forum has been organized to build on the work that has begun and to focus on increasing the participation and representation of Indian and Métis people within the delivery and governance of public education. It is time to develop a new relationship with Aboriginal input and cooperation at all stages to give meaning to the unique relationship between the Aboriginal community and the public education system in Saskatchewan.

This Forum will provide direction and ideas for bringing parents and school personnel closer together to work cooperatively to ensure a supportive learning environment for children."

Reverend Stan Cuthand

Reverend Cuthand, Associate Professor of Native Studies at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, was invited to the forum as the guest elder. Reverend Cuthand opened the Forum with a prayer in Cree and the following words.

> *"What is education? What is the meaning of education? Are the educational needs of our children being met? Do they learn to see themselves as worthwhile human beings? Do they recognize their origin and cultural background as an asset? Do they attach meaningful tasks with the expectation of success? Do they interact positively with other students? Do they recognize other cultural backgrounds?*
>
> *Many educators are unaware of the various unique Aboriginal cultures which our children represent. Specific things can be done to enhance understanding and tolerance for cultural differences.*
>
> - *Use language that is free from sexist or racist connotations.*
> - *Think about people having various characteristics other than race, sex or ethnic backgrounds.*
> - *Avoid the use of stereotypes in language that can hurt people's perceptions of themselves by limiting their potential.*
>
> *Many years ago, a teacher in one community asked me, "How do I get these people to speak. They don't say anything."*
>
> *I said, 'Talk about the ordinary things--the trees, the sun, the weather to reach them through their own culture.' To be a part of the community, you have to, without asking any questions, become part of that*

community. No questions asked: why is this? why do they sit in a circle? what are they eating? Too many questions are asked. By sitting and saying nothing while being part of the community, you will find more and more participation by the parents.

Both parents and teachers should be involved to examine recommendations that will lead to the development of Aboriginal education policies. Indian and Métis parents have a right to be part of the education system."

Craig Melvin, Executive Director

Saskatchewan School Trustees Association

"Professor Cuthand's remarks set an appropriate tone for the evening's introduction and our discussions tomorrow. I was reminded in his remarks of the importance that we must place on the humanness of the educational enterprise, that it is our task as teachers, school trustees, school administrators to build in all our students patience, strength and character. A year ago we had a similar Forum on Indian and Métis Education. Out of that first Forum there were a number of issues that were identified. Of the twelve broad directions that the participants identified . . parental participation and governance . . . are issues most appropriately taken up by the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association. We will focus on:

- *Procedures, processes and structures that make Indian and Métis parental involvement successful,*
- *Engaging parents in involvement and decision making around delivery and governance of education,*
- *Barriers and the facilitators to engaging*

parents in the delivery and governance of public education,

- *Structures and options that are currently available and future enhancements in the governance of education, and*
- *'What next?' What are the next steps that we ought to take?"*

"Let us focus on what can be done, rather than on what is wrong."

1992 Forum Participant

OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPATION CONTINUUM

School boards recognize the important role that parents have to play in the education of their children and therefore attach great importance to the direct involvement of parents in this process. A number of important studies have shown that parental involvement is directly related to children's success in learning. Experts say that broad parental involvement with school issues establishes a powerful climate for student learning both at home and in school, reduces behaviour problems and supports positive motivation for academic achievement. Boards of education recognize that specific actions need to be taken in order to make this involvement a reality. Effective schools and school systems foster the active involvement of their communities in program delivery and school governance. Participation in the operation of a school or a school system can be viewed as a continuum. One end the continuum includes involvement in the ongoing activities of the school while the other end represents involvement in the governance of the school or school system. Four major categories of participation along this continuum may be described as:

- communication,
- curricular support,
- collaboration, and
- autonomous control.

Participation In Education Continuum

Program Delivery ——————— **Governance**

Communication – Curricular Support - Collaboration - Autonomous Control

A brief description of each type of participation is outlined below:

Communication: Parents and community are spectators of the educational activities in the school. They may be recipients of written communications such as newsletters and calenders, purchasers of products sold by the school, or spectators at school functions.

Curricular Support: Parents and community are directly involved in the curricular activities of the school. They play a role as supervisors, volunteers, or tutors in the operations of the school.

Collaboration: The advice of parents and the community is sought on various issues as part of a shared governance structure established to direct a school or education system. Involvement varies from election as school board members to the establishment of structures permitting diverse groups to have input and share in the important decisions of the school or education system. A number of structures facilitate this type of involvement. They range from the ad hoc committee established to deal with a particular question to a formally established ongoing committee that has a formalized mandate or identifies the items with which it will deal.

Autonomous control: The established governance structure provides parents and community members with the authority to independently run their schools. Examples include a separate school, "church" school or school controlled by an Indian Band Council.

A variety of strategies and structures are necessary to involve parents and the community in the school and school system. The following table, "Participation in Education", outlines a variety of strategies and structures to engage Indian and Métis parents in the delivery and governance of public education.

Participation In Education Continuum

Communication	Curricular Support	Collaboration	Autonomous Control
- written communications	- homework	- advisory boards	- school councils
- school events	- volunteer programs	- representation on the school board	- contracted school management
- school-community liaison	- tutors/elders	- special agreements	- Tribal Council government boards
- parent-teacher conferences	- community outings	- joint agreements	- sale or lease of a school
		- community-school councils	- Band authority
		- associate schools	-decentralized authority
		- school-based decision making	

"Did you know that Saskatchewan Indians are the fastest growing group in this province? In probably all of Canada?"

Leader Post of June 30, 1993

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR SASKATCHEWAN'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

1 Saskatchewan has a large and growing Aboriginal population.

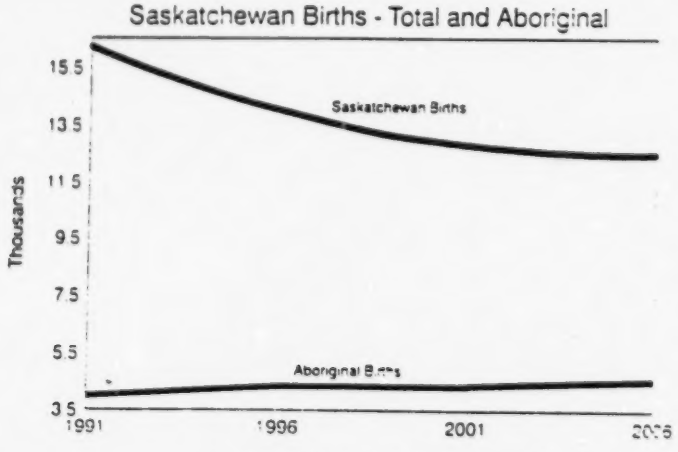
Saskatchewan's Indian and Métis population will increase by 50% in fifteen years.

Indian and Métis Population in Saskatchewan

	1991	2006
Indian Population	80,000	120,000
Métis Population	40,000	60,000
Total	120,000	180,000
% of Total Population	12%	18%

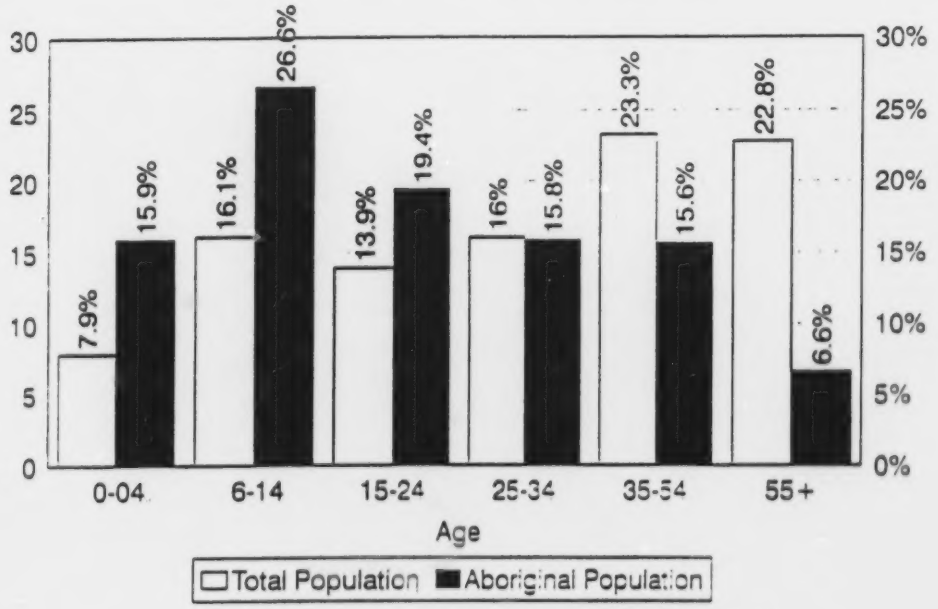
* Indian Population: Statistics Canada, 1990.
* Métis Population: Estimated at 50% of Indian population by SIMAS

The birthrate of Aboriginal peoples is approximately double the average for Saskatchewan (33 per 1,000 as compared to 17 per 1,000) and is projected to increase from 24% of all births in the province in 1991 to 37% in 2006.



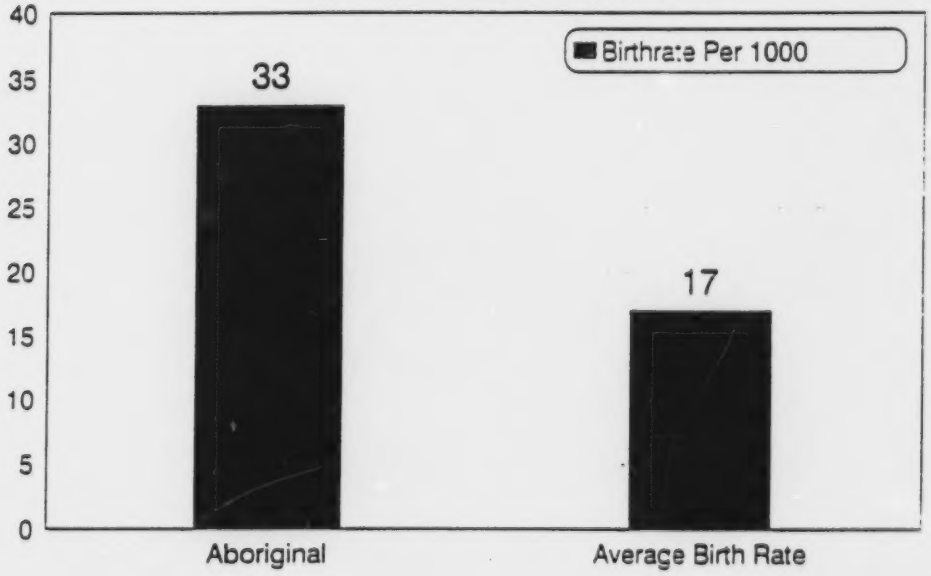
* "Partners In Action", Saskatchewan Education

Proportion of Saskatchewan and Aboriginal Population by Age Categories



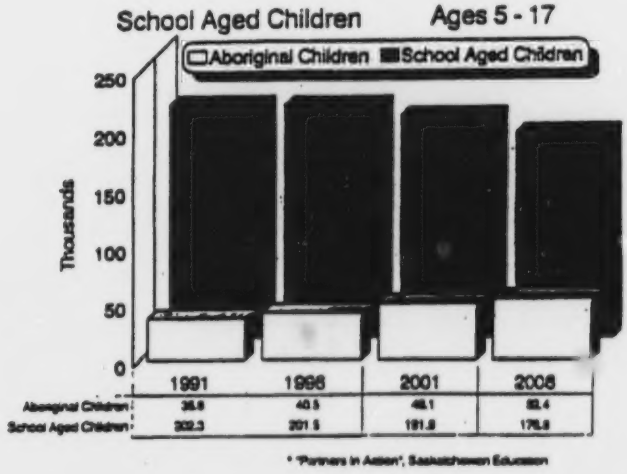
* Aboriginal People's Survey

Birthrates In Saskatchewan

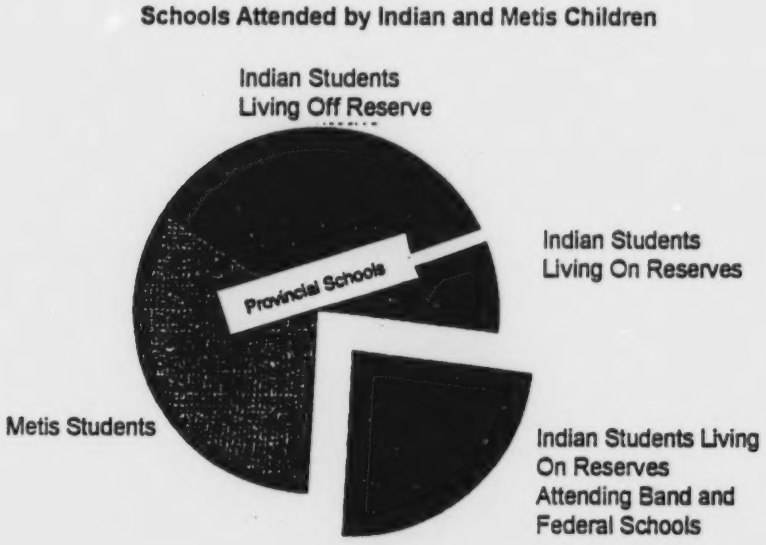


2 Indian and Métis children of school age are having and will continue to have a significant impact on the province's education system.

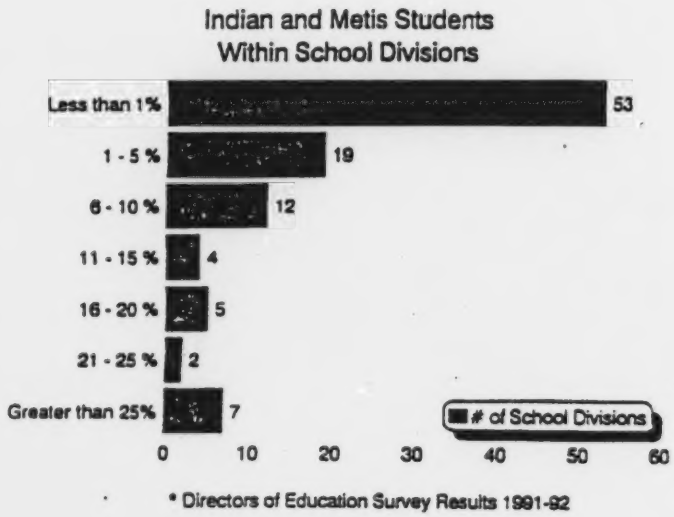
The proportion of students of Indian and Métis ancestry is expected to increase from 18% in 1991 to 30% in 2006.



75% of the children of Indian and Métis ancestry attend provincially controlled schools.


Schools Attended by Indian and Metis Children
Indian Students Living Off Reserve
Provincial Schools
Indian Students Living On Reserves
Metis Students
Indian Students Living On Reserves Attending Band and Federal Schools

Thirty school divisions reported an Indian and Métis student population greater than 5% in 1991-92.



* Directors of Education Survey Results 1991-92

3 Saskatchewan's Aboriginal population is becoming increasingly urban.

One half of the Indian population lives off reserves. Virtually all Métis people live off reserves.

Indian Population

	Population	Percentage
On Reserve	42,008	51%
Off Reserve	40,000	47%
Crown Land	1,421	2%
Total Population	81,700	100%

* Indian Registry, December 31, 1992

Many urban school divisions report rapidly growing Aboriginal populations.

School Divisions	Original circa 1987	1991	Increase Number	% of 1991 % Total Population	
N. Battleford	190	517	327	172%	25.0%
P.A. Comp.	108	312	208	193%	19.0%
P.A. Public	795	1360	565	71%	35.0%
P.A. Catholic	606	750	144	24%	29.3%
Saskatoon Cath.	808	1819	411	51%	9.2%
Saskatoon Public	1511	2012	501	33%	9.3%

* "Education Equity Cumulative Assessment" Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 1992

Of major cities reported in the Aboriginal People's Survey, Saskatoon had the highest concentration of people who identified as Métis; Regina had the highest proportion of people who identified as North American Indian.

Proportion of Indian and Métis Residents in Regina and Saskatoon Identifying as:

	Population	Indian	Métis
Saskatoon	14,225	30/1,000	27/1,000
Regina	12,165	38/1,000	19/1,000
Winnipeg	35,150	31/1,000	23/1,000

* Aboriginal People's Survey

4 Indian bands are taking control of education for students who live on reserves.

The percentage of students living on reserves who attend band controlled schools has increased by 71% since 1982 while the number attending provincial schools has declined by 10%.

Type of Jurisdiction	N	1982 %	-1983 N	1992 %	-1993 N	Change %
Band	4,094	35.0	10,666	71.4	+6,572	+160.5
Federal	2,998	25.6	133	.9	-2,865	-95.5
Provincial	4,610	39.4	4,129	27.6	-481	-10.4
Total	11,702		14,934		3,226	+27.6

* Nominal role, Indian Affairs, 1982-83, 1992-93

Children of Aboriginal ancestry are having now, and will continue to have, an increasing impact on school systems. As the number of total births in Saskatchewan declines, the number of Aboriginal births is increasing and the percentage of Aboriginal population as a whole in Saskatchewan is expanding. The total number of school aged children in this province was 194,042 in 1991, and is projected to drop to below 180,600 by the year 2002. (quote from Teacher Supply and Demand, Ken Horseman, 1992) At the same time, the number of Aboriginal school aged children is expected to increase by over 12,000 from 35,800 to well over 48,100. The Aboriginal school aged population is growing faster than the general school aged population.

While one of the largest groups of the general population is over age 55, the largest proportion of the Aboriginal population is aged 6-14 years. The elderly non-Aboriginal population of Saskatchewan is growing at the same time as the percentage of Aboriginal school-aged children. A rural or reserve to urban shift is also occurring in the Aboriginal population. Saskatchewan is experiencing a major restructuring of the make-up of its population.

How will school systems respond? Seventy-five percent of the children of Indian and Métis ancestry are currently in public schools. Although 53 school divisions currently have less than 1% of their population of Aboriginal ancestry, the increasing percentage of Aboriginal students and

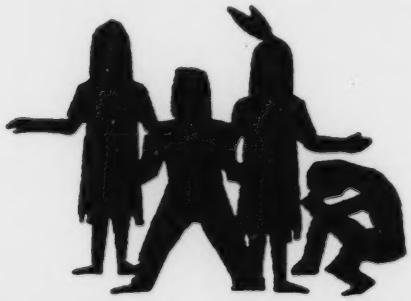
changes resulting from treaty land entitlements are motivating all school systems to ask "What can we do to better serve Indian and Metis students?". All school systems in this province are gaining greater awareness of Indian and Métis culture, history, and developing greater sensitivity in dealing with another culture.

The call by Indian and Métis parents for an increased voice in the operations of schools attended by their children has been articulated both formally and informally for many years. The National Indian Brotherhood (now the Assembly of First Nations), in its position paper entitled, **Indian Control of Indian Education** (1972), emphasized the role of parents by stating,

> *"If we are to avoid the conflict of values which in the past has led to withdrawal and failure, Indian parents must have control of education with the responsibility of setting goals."*

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples states in its October, 1992 publication Framing the Issues, that the call for Aboriginal control of education was heard from every direction.

> *"There was a clear consensus that control over policy, curriculum, and support services is necessary to create an educational experience that reinforces the positive identity of Aboriginal students and enables them to succeed academically."*
>
> (Framing the Issues, p. 8).



Roland Crowe, Chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, has stated that Indian people are ready, willing and able to take full control of their own education. Chief Roland Crowe states,

> *"We appreciate very much what educators have done for us. We sincerely do. But it's time we took our future into our own hands. Because no matter what we do - and our systems are not perfect - I can tell you that we could do no worse."*

Chief Crowe has also indicated that there will be Indian schools in Regina, Saskatoon, and other major cities run by Indian school boards. Schools on urban reserves would relieve provincial taxpayers of fiscal responsibility for such schools. (The School Trustee, April, 1992)

The Federation of Saskatchewan Nations has developed a strategic plan for education with the intention of developing a totally controlled Indian education system. The strategic plan provides for the development and implementation of a framework that enables First Nations to develop autonomous education systems. The roles of Elders, parents and the community are defined within the education process of First Nations.

Although the position of the Métis Society of Saskatchewan (MSS) on education is less clear, one might anticipate that the organization is also interested in establishing a Métis school system. The School Finance and Governance Review reports that the predecessor to the MSS, Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan (AMNSIS), articulated their position on education governance when bilateral and trilateral agreements were proposed in 1987. AMNSIS assumed the position that the fundamental goal of Self-Government for Métis and Non-Status Indian People could be exercised by:

"extending to them all the powers, privileges, and duties confirmed and imposed on the Roman Catholic Subjects and have the right, when numbers warrant, to primary and secondary school instruction out of public funds for minority Aboriginal educational facilities."

The design sought by the Métis is similar to the legislation proposed for Francophone governance. More recently, the MSS has requested that the Minister of Education provide them with a grant to undertake an evaluation of the degree to which the provincial education system is meeting the needs of Métis students.

In short, the Indian and Métis communities and their organizations are asking for increased control of their children's education and recognition as partners in educational governance. The SSTA is committed to exploring, developing and implementing strategies and structures that will enable the public education system to meet this need.

"It's not numbers that matter but individuals that count."

Barry Bashutski

ENGAGING PARENTS IN THE DELIVERY OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

Research indicates that parent involvement is important. In the early 1960's, one of the very first studies on parent involvement was undertaken by James Coleman. The results of his work showed that the greatest contributors to student success in school and predictors of success in school were:

- the socioeconomic status of the parents
- how well educated the parents were, and
- how wealthy they were

The more recent research that James Coleman has done, primarily in U.S. private schools, has led to a more useful understanding of parent involvement and the importance of reaching out to families at home and engaging them more directly in their children's education.

"Social Capital"

If the school, the community, the Church, and the home work together, it creates a common sense of value and understanding and purpose around what we are doing that forms a type of 'social capital'. This social capital, in turn, leads to increased student success in school. Consequently, working together is part of building a community with a greater capacity for learning.

We can begin that network that brings values together and leads to improved student success in school. It is important to reach out.

There are many reasons why schools should and do encourage active parental participation in schools. Education is recognized as a responsibility shared by the school, the home, the community, and the church. Recognition must be given to the broader community and the integral role they play in school success (Renihan & Renihan, 1991). Student achievement is related to the extent to which parents are actively involved in and support their children's learning. Successful school development projects have been related to high levels of communication. There are a number of compelling reasons for promoting parent involvement in schooling:

- Parents have a legitimate right to be involved as partners in the education of their children.
- Parents can play an important advocacy role in winning support for school based initiatives.
- Parents can play an important role in the determination of school priorities.
- Parents can contribute meaningfully in planning educational programs and policies.
- Parents are a valuable resource to school-based professionals, particularly in their ability to provide information on individual student learning problems, in identifying individual learning styles and idiosyncrasies, and in alerting professionals as to whether children need challenge or are at risk.

Renihan and Renihan (p. 5)

Kirkness (1992) in First Nations and Schools: Triumphs and Struggles, reported on a survey of elementary and secondary schools, and provincial departments of education concerning developments in Aboriginal education. The section of the report that dealt with parent and community involvement indicated parents and communities were involved in their schools in the following ways:

	Responses	Percent
Tribal/community-school liaison	143	29.6%
Parent advisory committees	142	19.4%
Volunteer programs	82	17.07%
Local school board representative	49	10.1%
Regular parent-teacher meetings	43	8.9%
Resident counsellors	24	4.9%

The fact that only one third of the responding schools completed this section of the survey suggests a good deal of work is required in the area of parent and community involvement.

There are times when it is very difficult to involve parents of Indian or Métis ancestry in the school. A substantial number of Aboriginal parents distrust the school system because of unpleasant memories of their school experiences. It is not unusual for certain community and family factors to further inhibit parental involvement in schools. Consequently, it is vital that when addressing parental involvement in a context where there are Aboriginal parents, a working relationship be established that provides for the development of mutual trust and respect. This means that plans to increase parental involvement have to be developed with parents and not for parents.

Some of the best resources for encouraging the participation of Indian and Métis parents have been developed in Saskatchewan. One of these resources is Partners at School: A Handbook on how to Involve Indian and Métis Parent in School Activities (1988), developed co-operatively by Saskatchewan Education and the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association. A second resource, The Indian and Métis Education Staff Development Program (1992) includes a substantial section entitled, "Developing Participation of Indian and Métis Peoples" that builds upon Partners in School. It also identifies a substantial list of resources that may assist a school in developing a plan to increase parental involvement. In addition, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, in its 1991 **Education Equity Report,** summarized activities in school systems with education equity plans designed to increase parental involvement (See Appendix C).

Given the current trends, how can we best work with Indian and Métis parents in program delivery and governance?

"What Makes Parental Involvement Successful?"

Forum participants shared the following key points:

- A welcoming climate must be developed
- A sense of mutual respect is essential
- Parents must share a common cause and a meaningful reason for being involved

1 A Welcoming Climate can be developed when we:

- Create a comfortable environment
- Recognize scepticism and fear around schools
- Provide a place for parents to have a "cup of tea"
- Reserve a school board spot
- Build and staff schools with thoughtful, caring administrators who are willing to make changes and teachers who take part and create a welcoming climate in every classroom
- Foster a positive attitude of openness, that allows people to change and develop positive attitudes toward schools
- Incorporate Community schools concepts
- Encourage teachers to go to reserves to meet and visit with families
- Open the school to the community
- Create a culturally conducive school
- Foster and develop success, for success breeds success
- Empower parents--express an earnest, sincere desire to include parents
- Hold interviews at band offices, provide transportation
- Serve food
- Train staff to welcome parent volunteers
- Open the library after hours to the community
- Invite parents to call teachers by their first name
- Use an integrated services approach to maximize use of the school facility
- Contact parents on a regular basis
- Have locally elected boards
- View "religions" as "value systems"

"Think US and WE rather than THEM"

Forum participant, 1993

2 A Sense of Mutual Respect is Essential

Respect can be demonstrated when we:

- View parents as partners
- Include Aboriginal people at various levels - administrators, teachers, aides
- Nurture culturally aware institutions
- Develop committed leadership that encourages public institutions to be equitable for all students
- Examine all decision-making structures--Avoid separating people by language and culture
- Increase flexibility in rules and legal issues, etc.
- Communicate respect fully and frequently
- See the need for awareness and understanding of barriers and the challenges of change and crossing cultures
- Attend or host special cultural activities
- "Know ourselves and who our children are''
- Believe that cross-cultural education is for EVERYONE
- Although 'festival' approach may foster racism, cultural mosaics help to increase respect for self and others

3 Parents Must Share a Common Cause And Reason For Involvement

This can be developed through:

- Curriculum and extra-curricular activities that reflect interests of parents. "Cultural power"
- Parent volunteers
- Cooperative ventures
- Contacting parents about their children and making decisions about them
- Forums that encourage meaningful input
- Everyone working together
- Increased parent awareness to become involved
- A belief that what we do in schools is meaningful
- Video-taped parent-student soccer games
- Elder programs
- Parent advisory groups setting directions
- Community leaders participating and involving others--such as grandparents. A respectful approach and invitation to respected elders is so important.
- Curriculum that is relevant to students and parents
- Educators being encouraged and valued as learners
- Implement these ideas

"The angry parent who comes to school is obviously someone who cares. After dealing with the issue at hand, involve that person in the school."

Forum Participant, 1993

A Different Kind of Inviting

John Barton, Principal of Princess Alexandra School, Saskatoon, was invited to share experiences regarding engaging parents in school learning at the forum.

1 Our Community School

> *A community school is concerned with the involvement of all residents of its community. It seeks to improve the total environment and quality of living for children, families, older people, all who live in the neighbourhood. It develops programs related to the needs of the neighbourhood. It brings the services of health, welfare, recreational and educational agencies so close to the people that they are readily available.*
>
> Community School Program: Discussion Paper, Saskatchewan Education, 1980, Section 3.0, p. 4.
> History of Community Schools: An Overview

As a staff we adopted that vision and that hope. Our trustees took this further. They had a symposium on inner city schools. They developed a concept plan for what community schools or inner city schools should look like and the jobs that we should be doing. We get support at the trustee level when they ask, "How are things going? How can we help? How can we move this along?"

2 Inviting Parents Through Child Success

As educators, our primary job is the academics. We can't lose track of that. Sometimes we start to wander down the path of "we need to provide this service", or "we need to provide that service", or "we need to get parents interested". But frankly we need to keep in the back of our minds the real reason that we're there, and that is for the academics. And through the academics, through restructuring we found that indirectly we've been able to invite parents into the school.

A while ago we started a police liaison program at our school. We did a pre and post survey with the students. One of the criteria we measured was parents attitudes towards the police as recorded by the child. Of all the categories we surveyed, that area was the most surprising. When children were having good experiences with the liaison officer, they were going home and telling their parents about it. The parents started to feel better about it, or at least the students felt that the parents felt better about working with the police.

Our hoop dance troop, another example of working with children, keeps students attending school to provide the academics. Parents are now coming to us and saying, "Thanks a lot." "What do you mean, thanks a lot?" "Well, my child is involved in hoop dancing . . . now I have to learn all that."

Think about how you grow with children. You share in their experience. If they have success at something, you feel proud. If

they're struggling with something, you feel for them. And the parents we're working with in the inner city are no different. I think of my own experiences; when my children are having a good time at school, I feel more invited to go to the school. If the children aren't having as good an experience, I tend to back off.

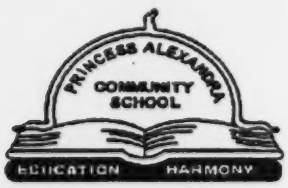
3 Changes at Princess Alexandra School

What makes classrooms inviting? What are the characteristics that create inviting teachers? (Purkey & Novak)

- **Schools that are Intentionally Inviting:**

We are intentionally inviting the parents to some specific things: special events, soup and bannock, having a room parent come in, having tea or coffee, feasts, what they are comfortable with--an area where they have some expertise.

We cleaned up our building to make it look attractive, make it feel inviting. We modernized our logo to capture what it is in our community that we believe in, and what it is in our school that we believe in. It has an Aboriginal motif. Harmony is actually one of the words that the students came up with when we asked them: "When you think of Princess Alexandra School, what do you think of?"



We have a school jacket which the staff wears in school and when we go out in the community. Changing our attire has enabled us to become more comfortable in the community and become more respected by the community.

- **Unintentionally Inviting Schools**

We're doing things but we don't realize exactly what we're doing, but they have an inviting effect. One was when we started to deliver students' progress reports to the home. We saw more parents starting to come to the school.

- **Unintentionally Disinviting Schools**

We do things that are unintentional and they have a rippling effect. We may inadvertently say something that may turn somebody off. School fees are unintentionally disinviting, for example. The parents would come in with their child; "Oh we're glad you're here. Your child's in grade 7, that's $23.00--oh' you've got another one in grade 8?--that's $32.00. You've got a child in grade 4--that's OK, that's only $24.00." What is the message we send to the parents? We're unintentionally disinviting.

Our old logo unintentionally was disinviting. We changed that.

- **Intentionally Disinviting Schools**

We had a policy in place or a procedure whereby, for example, if the students didn't bring a permission form back, then they couldn't go on the trip.

4 A Paradigm Shift

We needed to say, "How can we do some things differently?--to take a real risk, to teach classes without basal readers, to teach classes without workbooks, to make home visitations, to become life-long learners."

We have to build that comfort zone where we can make mistakes, where we can go to our parents and say, "We're struggling with this. We don't know everything that there is to know about some of these subjects."

We needed to look at factors that impact on us in the school because most of us come from the middle-class experience. All of a sudden we're thrown into a situation that is no longer middle-class. "We're bringing, solutions from a middle-class perspective, to a nonmiddle-class situation with poverty issues." We're teaching from a middle-class perspective. What works at some of our suburban schools doesn't work in the inner cities.

We needed to try and see how we could better address the children, keeping in mind that we wanted to focus on the academics.

- *A Re-entry room. A number of students have many, many issues in their personal lives that prevent them from coming to school. They couldn't function in a regular classroom. Eventually they move back into a classroom or into a more appropriate program.*

- *Reading recovery. If you read intensively with students over a period of time one-on-one, volunteers read to students; students read to volunteers, reading levels are enhanced very quickly.*
- *Family groupings for instructions. We've done away with, as much as we can, the notion of grade one, grade two, grade three--one grade, one teacher, moving to family groupings. We have the primary family that spans the students aged five, six and seven. Our middle family fits the students that are eight, nine and ten years of age. Our senior family is for students aged eleven, twelve and thirteen.*
- *Fully funded pre-school available to our community.*
- *Library open to the community at night.*
- *Media at our school to record hoop dancing. Our students are becoming more familiar with the camera crews when they come in, with the press photographers when they come in and we do not really notice what is going on anymore. It has become part of our routine. When we were in Toronto, the CBC students covered our students in one school and provided workshops at their facility in Toronto.*
- *An alternate school day. We have modified our school day to reduce the risk of an accident and to provide a nutrition program.*
- *An internal mail system.*

  Canada Post has helped us to set up an internal mail system in our school to encourage the students to write letters. Parents even come in and drop letters in the mailbox and it gets taken to their child.

- *Partnerships with the Star Phoenix and Nutana Collegiate. One of the interesting things about Nutana Collegiate link is that our students go over there and visit once in a while.*
- *Student reports are delivered directly to their homes by mail.*
- *The Inner City Police Liaison Program*
- *Home and School Liaison Program. The Indian and Métis Friendship Centre has an advisor who comes regularly to our school and shares with us what is going on in the home environment. That is invaluable.*

With some of the things we are doing, we will have parents come and ask:

"Is this the school that has a re-entry program? I want my daughter back in."

"Is this the school where they don't have workbooks?"

"Is this the school where you only charge $10.00 for the school year, because I want to take my child but I cannot afford the fees that they are asking at other schools."

If we change some things, we become intentionally invitational, and we are focusing more on how we invite parents through the children. The children have good experiences at school and hopefully, the parents will feel better and that will encourage them. And . . .

Driving and Restraining Forces that Influence Parent Involvement

What are the driving and restraining forces that influence engaging Indian and Métis parents in the delivery and governance of public education?

Driving forces are those conditions that encourage increasing parent involvement. Restraining forces are those conditions that work in opposition to increasing parent involvement. In order to effect the change, driving forces are increased and restraining forces are decreased.

Forum participants, after identifying and categorizing those factors in operation that contribute to our current reality, suggested ways to deal with existing restraining forces.

"Power must be shared, but the use of power must be learned."

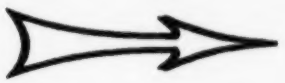
Forum Participant

DRIVING FORCES

(Internal and External Facilitators)

- Native teachers as role models
- Education equity programs
- Meetings between school boards, parents and teachers
- Controversial issues that can often pull a community together
- Cree language programs
- Inviting Elders into the schools
- Displaying Aboriginal art
- Extending invitations to parents time and time again
- Knowledgeable administrators
- Reasonable and predictable student fees
- Delivery of report cards
- Special attention to Staff selection
- Culturally relevant curriculum and programs
- Cross-cultural programming
- Aboriginal people asserting political will
- Sensitive, understanding people in key places
- Commitment on the part of teachers
- Magnet schools and the establishment of Alternate Community Schools
- Inter-agency approaches and true partnerships
- Networking through forums like this
- Genuine desire of Aboriginal parents for students to do well
- Partners in classrooms and parent partners
- Students success brings in parents--success breeds success
- Lack of funding forces new and innovative thinking
- Flexibility in Saskatchewan education funding that helps students
- Programs like IMED and START
- "Critical mass" can increase involvement
- Curriculum and staff development
- Indian control of funding allows say in schools i.e. Band control and tuition agreements
- Board and senior administrator support
- Public pressure and influence
- Band financial support
- NORTEP, SUNTEP and ITEP programs
- Community School programs
- Aboriginal Advisory Councils and parent advisory to school boards

RESTRAINING FORCES



(Internal and External Barriers)

- High school fees
- Formal dress and formal atmosphere
- Reluctance and resistance to change
- Traditional delivery of education
- Language differences
- Lack of counsellors and translators
- School Board's lack of commitment to equity, hiring and inservice
- Negative school climate
- Conventional attitude of some teachers
- Lack of networking between schools and systems, this results the
  - wheel being reinvented time and time again
- Lack of Aboriginal perspectives in curricular areas
- Screening programs that rely exclusively on academic averages
- Apathy
- Lack of community consensus on purpose of schools
- Lack of cultural sensitivity
- The barrier of personal mind sets and values in dealing with
  - attendance, lates, and discipline good teaching and standards
- Classrooms that are engaging and exciting
- Focusing on curriculum rather than children
- Legislative barriers that limit participation
- Power structures and political situations that keep things formal
- Economics
- Apathy and individual isolation
- Systemic racism
- Standardized testing
- High school programs focused on post-secondary education
- Lack of networking among schools
- The "funding maze" and fixed funding
  - ·Funding cuts
  - ·Inequitable fundraising for particular schools
  - ·Being restricted in use of funds
  - ·Gaps in federal funding
- Outside political forces that encourage separate systems
- Indian Act prevents integrated working
- Shortage of Aboriginal teachers
- Aboriginal people not well represented on school boards
- Structures of governance within school boards

Overcoming Restraining Forces and Barriers to Parent Involvement

1 Resources and Financial Barriers:

To effectively engage parents as partners; appropriate material, human, and financial resources must be available. Forum participants offered the following suggestions:

- Allocation of resources indicates commitment and accountability.
- We need to rely more on human resources as financial resources diminish.
- It is time to "share the load". Schools cannot keep expanding their mandates on unchanging budgets.
- It isn't a problem finding resources if the job is being done

2 Communication and Networking--Beginning the Dialogue:

Productive partnerships are built through effective two-way communication which includes on-going dialogue and networking.

- Parents will talk to anyone who will really listen--teachers, aides, librarians, resource room teachers, administrators
- Keep communication as open, as accessible, and as frequent as possible.
- Provide opportunities for people to learn names and get to know one another in many different ways.

3 Building a community for learning:

Education and home-school partnerships are most effective were there is a conscious effort to building a community were learning is maximized.

- Stress efforts that encourage integration rather than segregation. Sporting and cultural events provide opportunities for bringing diverse communities together to support children and school goals. Open community and reserve functions to all.

4 Political/Legislative Structures:

Review political and legislative structures to ensure that they are enabling and empowering for education in each community.

- Changes in legislation are necessary to increase communication.
- Facilitate communication through joint advisory boards and interagency committees. Meet together to discuss issues and direction.

5 Diverse Perspectives:

Public schools must be sensitive to diverse mind sets, values and cultural perspectives.

- Effective schools will require understanding and compromise.
- Respectful understanding and two-way communication go a long way toward learning more about one another.

6 Shared Ownership:

A sense of shared ownership is essential to developing commitment and responsibility.

- Issues and tasks should be approached from a broader global perspective.
- Power sharing and realistic representation on committees and school boards develop shared ownership.

7 Intentionally Inviting:

Schools must consciously reach out to parents and the broader community.

- Be aware that different things work in different communities.
- Clean and physically inviting schools with displays of student artwork and projects welcome visitors.
- Involve students in the community and the community in the classroom.
- Exemplify "Tawow"–"Welcome! There is something for you here." This Cree word has appeared in other gatherings to express this ideal.

8 Increasing Awareness:

It is important for the school to encourage community learning since people only support what they understand.

- Provide opportunities for parents and teachers to exchange information and opinions to influence attitudes, and really LISTEN to one another.

9 Eliminate Racism:

Racism is evident in the behaviours of some individuals and how the education system is organized. Suggestions include:

- Educating the general public, teachers-in-training, and practising on how to recognize racism and respond to it.
- "Walk the Talk"--mean what we see and act on it.
- Recognize personal biases and possible misunderstandings.

GOVERNANCE

Participants at the 1993 Forum reviewed present governance structures and considered possible options for change.

Current Government Structures

Present initiatives in Saskatchewan include:

1 The Education Act

The Education Act provides for participation in the governance of schools through election to a school division's board of education, a school district's board of trustees or a local school's advisory committee. Although legislation provides the same opportunity for individuals of Indian and Métis ancestry to be elected to boards or advisory committees as it does for all ratepayers, it is well known that Aboriginal people are often under-represented on these bodies.

Currently, approximately 16 of a total of 750 trustees are of Aboriginal ancestry. Only in cases where a majority of the ratepayers in a division are of Aboriginal ancestry (Northern Lights School Division or Ile a la Crosse) or where special provisions have been made, such as the establishment of an Indian reserve as a subdivision, does representation become proportionate. For example, in Prince Albert, as the proportion of Aboriginal people in the city's population has grown, representation on the public and separate boards has increased. At the school level, there is a substantial natural increase in participation as the number of Aboriginal people grows.

2 Special Provisions Through Tuition Agreements.

A number of boards of education have signed tuition agreements with band councils on neighbouring reserves. These agreements make provision for participation in the decision making in three ways.

a) A subdivision may be created that provides for the election of a band member to the board of education. Section 27(2) of The Education Act speaks to this provision. Eight boards of education have made this provision in tuition agreements signed with twelve Indian bands.

b) Indian band representation may be provided on the board of trustees. Representation may exist where an Indian reserve has been designated as a subdivision as well as where the reserve exists outside the school division. Section 127(1.1) of The Education Act provides the legal framework for an Indian Band Council to appoint one person to the board of trustees of the school district in which pupils from the reserve receive instructional services. It should be noted that a tuition agreement does not have to be in place for an Indian band to have representation on the local board.

c) More recent agreements speak to there being set meetings between the board of education and the Indian band's school committee or the Band Council.

3 Community Schools Parent Councils

Community schools are required to have parent councils. Because these schools have been established to combat the effects of inner city poverty and target an Aboriginal population, councils typically have a high proportion of Indian and Métis parents. This does not occur by accident; rather the principal, community school coordinator, and community members actively encourage participation.

4 Associate Schools

Joe Duquette High School (originally called the Saskatoon Native Survival School) was established in 1980 by a group of Indian and Métis parents who were concerned about the high drop-out rate among Aboriginal students. A tripartheid agreement between Saskatchewan Education, Saskatoon Catholic School Division, and the Parent's Council articulated the roles and responsibilities of each signatory. In summary form, the department funds the school, the board provides the administrative framework for the operation of the school, and the Parent's Council is responsible for the "cultural life" of the school. They are actively involved in school programming, approve hirings, and develop supporting structures (nursery, group homes, and counselling services).

5 Decentralization of Authority

Northern Lights School Division has delegated increased authority to the boards of trustees in the school division. This has been done to place the locus of decision making closer to the school and community, a real need in a school division that encompasses one half the province.

In addition to those responsibilities stipulated in Section 136 of The Education Act, district boards in the Northern Lights School Division have been assigned responsibilities in the areas of local policy development, program, instruction, decentralized budgeting, plant operation and maintenance, transportation, and student-related activities.

6 Aboriginal Advisory Committee

Prince Albert Public School Division has established an Aboriginal Advisory Committee to the board. The committee is composed of two parent representatives from each school who are appointed by the principal, one of whom has voting rights. One board member is assigned to the committee. Central office administrative support is provided. The committee deals with system-wide issues that are referred to it by the board or are identified by the committee. The committee plays a role in helping Aboriginal people establish networks in the city.

- In Northern Saskatchewan where the majority of the electors are people of Aboriginal ancestry, we have strong representation on the Board of Education.
- When a Reserve or an Indian Band purchases services from the Board of Education that Reserve becomes a sub-division of the School Division and through that mechanism a member is elected or named to the Board of Education.
- Community schools of Saskatoon, Regina, and Prince Albert are required to have a parent council. The parent council works with the school staff, providing advice and counsel. It is an important link to the community. The community schools are in areas of the city where there is a high proportion of people of Aboriginal ancestry.
- Associate schools such as Joe Duquette High School are a possibility. It is an example of the agreement between the Saskatoon Separate Board of Education, the Province, and the parent-council. This group establishes how the school will be governed and funded.

- The Board of Education policy can also provide other mechanisms for Indian and Métis parents to become more involved in educational governance. In the Northern Lights School Division, the Division Board has delegated authority to the District Board of Trustees in each one of the communities in the north, and those District Boards of Trustees are largely made up of people of Aboriginal ancestry.
- The Prince Albert Public Board of Education has established an Advisory Committee to the Board of Education. It does not have responsibilities for a single school but rather for the entire school division.

Alternative Structures for Consideration

Participants at the Forum were provided with an opportunity to consider and suggest new alternatives for a governance structure that would encourage Indian and Métis involvmeent. The majority of participants agreed that change is necessary. All new initiatives must institute processes for improved communication, curricular support, and collaboration. Boards of education could develop and institute a variety of processes to ensure appropriate parental involvement including surveys, forums, meetings and school visits.

Two publications, **Aboriginal Self Government and Education in Canada**, and **Facing the Challenge** outline a number of structures that may have potential for accommodating Aboriginal needs in Saskatchewan. Certain structures and models described in these publications are similar to those being considered in Saskatchewan. For example, the elected local school committees that are suggested are very similar to the school councils described in the 1992 **Langlois-Scharf Report** and the 1993 **Task Force on Educational Governance Report**.

1 Autonomous Control

It is likely that the number of Indian and Métis controlled education authorities will increase. While there may be some competition for students with publicly controlled schools, these new authorities may be more representative of the communities being served. The following options are envisioned:

1 **Sale or Lease of Provincial Schools to Indian Bands:** At least one school is currently being leased to an Indian band. Negotiations are underway to sell another provincial school to an Indian band. These schools are or will be operated as band controlled schools. The bands will likely accept students from the communities where the schools are located as tuition fee paying students. Legislative changes in The Education Act are required if these arrangements are to be expedited.

2 **Public Indian, Métis or Aboriginal Authorities:** The Government of Saskatchewan is committed to devolving certain programs in a number of areas to public Aboriginal authorities established for specific purposes. Again, legislative changes would be required to permit the turning over of selected schools in the provincial education system to such authorities.

3 **District Aboriginal Governance Bodies:** Aboriginal school districts and boards could be created within present or extended provisions of provincial statute.

4 **First Nations or Tribal Council Government:** Local governance in Aboriginal education could be under the jurisdiction of First Nations or Tribal Council government. The Educational arms of such governments would function like divisional or county boards.

This occurs in a variety of ways:

- Selling or leasing provincial schools to Indian Bands. In Saskatchewan, a Band is currently leasing a school from the school division and operating that school as their own.
- Public, Indian and Métis, Aboriginal Authorities could be established, like Francophone school governance.
- First Nation's government might operate something like the Provincial Government, having educational authorities at the local level.

These forms of autonomous control would represent a breaking away and separation from the public and separate schools as they now exist. While there are strong advocates of such a separation, opinions are divided on the educational merits of this approach.

2 Collaborative Joint Control

Further opportunities for shared decision making and control could be explored. A variety of structures that ensure meaningful consultation and input could be considered including:

1 **Schools Operated Under Joint Agreements:** Section 96(1) of The Education Act currently permits school boards to sign agreements with certain parties to jointly operate schools. Legislative changes could extend this right to Indian bands.

Forum participants encouraged consideration of the establishment of associate schools. Schools with a majority of students of Indian and Métis ancestry would be controlled by a parent's council while remaining within the administrative framework of the school division. Appropriate roles and responsibilities would be clearly identified.

2 **Seats Assigned to Aboriginal Representatives:** Enhanced statutory provision for Aboriginal participation in existing provincial school boards and districts could provide a governance mechanism for Indian and Métis peoples who wish a particularly close link with provincial education, combined with practical participation in the decision making of boards.

Forum participants expressed guarded support for assigning school board seats to ensure Indian and Métis representation. Indian bands could be designated as subdivisions to provide for the election of at least one band member to the board of education. Urban ares could designate a minimum number of seats on the school board to represent the percentage of Indian and Métis people in the community. Participants focused more on searching for ways to overcome an apparent reluctance to serve.

3 **Associate Boards:** Alternative education programs for urban Aboriginal students could be operated by an Aboriginal board of directors in association with a neighbouring public school division. Such boards would have the status of "associate boards". The Sacred Circle project in Edmonton currently operates with such a board.

3 Community Based Control

Decentralized school-based management has risen in popularity and support during recent years. Such a system would allow greater parental and community control within the structure of the larger school division. Alternatives include:

1 **Site Based School Management:** Boards of education would delegate greater policy setting and administrative control to individual school sites.

Parent involvement could be increased through decentralized school management. In the Northern Lights School Division significant decisions are being made at the school level by the principal and staff in cooperation with community representatives. The board of education has established guidelines and training programs to support this move to decentralized decision-making. As members of their communities, Aboriginal parents are key players in deciding how their schools will be run.

2 **Enhanced School Councils: The Langlois-Scharf Report** recommended that differences among communities be accommodated in a restructured education system where each school within a larger School Division be required to establish a school council. The school council would consist of the school principal and a set number of elected parents and teachers. The Council would be advisory to the principal and to the division board. Such a structure would "foster and advance the viability of the public school divisions while recognizing the differentiations that have been, or may be, decided by governments or the courts" (p. 228).

Forum participants supported the establishment of school parent councils. Parent councils might operate like current community school councils or the school councils proposed in the **Langlois-Scharf Report** or a school-level governance body recommended by the SSTA Task Force on Educational Governance report. These bodies would be elected by the parents and others in the school community and have a significant voice in the operation and ongoing improvement of the school.

3 **Charter Schools:** This idea, approved experimentally in Minnesota in 1991, permits any qualified institution or group to seek to set up a charter school. The charter application must be sponsored by a public body

(government or school board). The school must be open to all, tuition free, non-sectarian, non-selective, and non-discriminatory. For each student attracted to the school, a grant equal to the average per pupil amount currently provided to other schools would be provided.

There is a range of options, many of which we are doing now. It is time to talk about other possibilities and begin to carve out a sense of where we may go together in the future.

SUMMARY

Saskatchewan's population is aging, the birth rate is declining and people are moving from rural areas to the cities. As well, the Aboriginal population is growing at a faster rate than the general population. Saskatchewan's population, in the years ahead, will include a large number of Aboriginal children and young adults, and an increasingly large number of elderly people of Anglo-European ancestry. The anticipated large number of Aboriginal youth has profound implications for the education system. It means greater emphasis on Aboriginal history, culture and traditions in all aspects of the school program.

It will also affect enrolment in provincially-funded K-12 schools. There is a growing trend in the Aboriginal community to educate children on reserves in band-controlled schools. This trend means declining enrolments for many provincial schools. Instead of offering a full K-12 program, some Indian bands purchase services from local provincial schools. This means that enrolments in provincial schools can fluctuate dramatically from year to year and that provincial schools must adapt program offerings in order to retain Aboriginal students.

Parents want a voice in decision-making about educational programs and services and are no longer content to be passive recipients of information provided by the school. The fact that increasing numbers of Saskatchewan parents are of Aboriginal ancestry will greatly influence the nature of educational decision-making and programming in the years ahead.

It is our hope that the 1993 forum and this report will serve as an important source of direction and provide ideas for bringing parents and school personnel closer together to work co-operatively to ensure a supportive learning environment for children.

There is no clear consensus. We need to continue work in each community to find acceptable answers.

"Two different languages are being used and the langauge is interesting. One group is using `involved', `representative', `participating' and the other group is using `control', `decision making' and `autonomy'."

Forum Participant

"There is no one solution. There are different kinds of solutions because we have different kinds of communities. What really makes it work is the heart, when people come together and put their words together with their actions."

Forum Participant

"When struggling with disagreement and nonconsensus in our groups today, we listened and tried to understand. And that, perhaps, is the basis for where we go from here. It is a time to listen with respect and understand the various points of view."

Forum Participant

"It is time to marry the ideal and reality, rather than exploring either/or issues."

Forum Participant

Forum participants suggested that it is time to further enhance connections through:

- Forums that include parents.
- Stakeholders in education meeting together to define "meaningful involvement". In what ways can parents be involved in the education of their children?
- Enhanced co-operative and joint efforts among the partners in education.
- An Indian and Métis advisory committee to the SSTA.
- Learning to use the available resources more efficiently and effectively.
- Changes in legislation that open new doors and present increased opportunities for innovation and involvement.
- Planning for action at the school level. (Appendix D)

"The dialogue must begin not only here, but at the community level."

Forum Participant

"The wheels are spinning. Let's get the car in gear."

Forum Participant

Perhaps the strongest call to action came at the personal level...

"It is time to provide leadership back in our own roles."

Forum Participant

"We can no longer sit back, shrug, complain and let others take the leadership role."

Forum Participant

"Each of us is the next step."

Forum Participant

Appendix A

Agenda

Thursday, October 14, 1993

7:00 p.m.	Registration
7:30	Welcome: Ken Krawtz, SSTA President Stan Cuthand, Elder Craig Melvin, SSTA Executive Director
8:00	Presentation: Demographic Trends
8:30	Discussion: "What are the implications for public education?" (small group)
9:15	Reporting (plenary)
9:30	Social

Friday, October 15, 1993

8:45 a.m.	Overview: Craig Melvin, SSTA Executive Director
9:00	Discussion: "What makes parental involvement successful?" (small group)
9:40	Reporting (plenary)
10:00	Presentation: Engaging Parents in the Delivery of Education
10:20	Discussion: What are the barriers and facilitators to engaging parents in the delivery of education?
11:15	Reporting (plenary)
12:00	LUNCH (provided)
1:00	Presentation: Engaging Parents in the Governance of Education
1:20	Discussion: What are the barriers and facilitators to engaging parents in the governance of education?
2:00	Reporting (plenary)
2:30	Discussion: How do we address the barriers? How can the Association assist school boards in increasing the participation and representation of Indian and Métis people within the delivery and governance of public education?
3:00	Reporting (plenary)
3:20	Summary and closing remarks
3:30	Adjourn

Appendix B

Participating School Boards and Organizations

Scenic View S.D.
Biggar S.D.
Blaine Lake S.D.
Broadview S.D.
Cupar S.D.
Ile a la Crosse S.D.
Indian Head S.D.
Kamsack S.D.
Kinistino S.D.
Last Mountain S.D.
Meadow Lake S.D.
North Battleford S.D.
North Battleford R.C.S.S.D.
Northern Lakes S.D.
Northern Lights S.D.
Parkland S.D.
Prince Albert S.D.
Prince Albert R.C.S.S.D.
Regina S.D.
Regina R.C.S.S.D.
Saskatoon S.D.
St. Paul's R.C.S.S.D.
Turtleford S.D.
Wadena S.D.
Wilkie S.D.
Prince Albert Rural S.D.
Tiger Lily S.D.
Prince Albert Comprehensive S.D.
Saskatchewan Valley S.D.
Yorkton Regional High School Division
Timberline S.D.
Creighton S.D.

Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations
Metis Society of Saskatchewan
University of Regina
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment
Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation
L.E.A.D.S.
Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission
Saskatchewan Community Schools Association
Saskatchewan School Trustees Association

Appendix C

Further ideas for Enhancing Parent Involvmeent

Human Rights Commission

Communication

- Develop alternate strategies to enhance parent-school contact,
- Have teachers make periodic visits and hold interviews on the reserves,
- Knocking on doors home contact,
- Parent day early in the school year,
- Buddy/peer approach,
- "Old" parents welcoming "new" parents first day of school,
- Native Guidance Counsellor inform Native parents on parental rights, responsibilities and expectations,
- Communicate students' successes to parents,
- Conduct workshops for Indian parents on reserves,
- Encourage Native representation at open houses held for parents,
- Arrange information meetings for Native parents and students,
- Encourage and identify Native people who wish to act as facilitators of communication between the school and the Native community.

Consultation

- Employ home-school liaison workers,
- Involve Chiefs and Band Councils, Native Counsellors and Education Committees in developing programs to increase Native parental participation in schools,
- Undertake surveys to determine Native parents' interests and concerns,
- Consult District Chiefs, Native organizations, and other interested agencies in the development of activities to enhance Native parental involvement,
- Encourage staff to use Native parents as resource people, volunteers and workers (i.e. planning and preparation of nutrition programs),

- Education Equity Committee to meet with Native parents,
- Social skills programs for families,
- Networking transportation and child-care for parents to attend parent-teacher interviews, field days, etc.,
- "Study groups" for parents about education,
- Introduce Partners inservice program for schools working with parents or Indian/Native Ancestry,
- Incentives - recognition of volunteers,
- Native parents to teach "beading" craft program,
- Native parents and elders will be promoted as resource personnel, encouraged to become directly involved in the planning and implementation of education programs for their children,
- Involve parents to tell Indian stories and legends in the classrooms, coordinate mini pow-wow, hold traditional Indian feast,
- Organize meetings that bring together students, parents and teachers. Topics could include communication, racism, social and sporting activities,
- Encourage parents to bring a relative or friend to school meetings.

Collaboration

- Encourage Indian/Métis representation on Boards of Trustees,
- Review school level parent participation structures to ensure that no institutional barriers exist to the involvement of Indian and Métis parents or guardians,
- Create subdivisions on reserves and have each sub-division elect one member to the Board of Education,
- Parents' Advisory Committee structured to have Native representation,

- Encourage Education Committees on the reserves to host events such as Awards Day, Career Day, Cultural Day and invite non-native parents, teachers and board members to attend,
- Develop Native Parents Advisory Committee,
- Board invite the Chief and members of education committees to attend board meetings.

Appendix D

Planning for Action

The following guidelines offer suggestions for developing a plan to increase parental involvement.

1 As a staff develop a rationale for increasing parental involvement

To be successful, a school initiative of this nature requires that active support and involvement of all staff members. This is particularly true if proposed changes may present a threat to individuals. The staff must understand why increasing parental involvement is an important initiative and how parents may be involved in the school.

Remember, all schools currently involve parents in the school; you must build upon what exists.

Activity: Devote a staff meeting to the answering the following questions:

1 How do we currently involve parents in the school?

2 Why would we want to increase parental participation in our school?

3 What resources are there in the school and the community that would assist us in this initiative?

4 What barriers are there to this initiative?

You may wish to close the staff meeting by creating a committee to lead in the development of a school plan to increase parental involvement. Initially, the committee can synthesize the responses to these questions.

2 Obtain division board and local board or parent council support for initiatives

If children from a reserve attend your school, you will also want school committees, or band council support. You may want representatives from these groups on your committee.

3 Assess the School Community

Hold a parent meeting to solicit support for and input into the school plan. It is extremely important that representation from all parts of the community attend this meeting. The meeting could commence with an overview of the rationale that has been developed and a description of what is meant by parental involvement. Parents could then be divided into groups to answer the following questions.

1. What is the school doing well in involving parents in the school?
2. On what areas of parental involvement should the school concentrate?
3. How can we assist in enhancing parental involvement in the school?
4. What barriers are there to parents becoming more involved in the school?

Consider closing the meeting by expanding the committee charged with developing this plan by adding a number of parents. It is important that parents be representative of the community. Remember, committees that are too large have difficulty functioning effectively.

4 Develop the Plan

At this point the committee can commence designing a plan to meet local needs that utilizes local resources. Important resources include: information from the staff meeting(s) and the public meeting(s), resources that have been identified earlier or gathered in support of the initiative, and the parents and teachers on the committee.

5 Implement the Plan.

A very important part of the implementation involves the communication of initiatives to the various school and community audiences.

6 Assess the Plan

Remember to assess the plan in terms of its original objectives. Stakeholders should be involved in the assessment.

7 Revise the Plan

Revise the plan in accordance with feedback from the assessment and to meet evolving needs.

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